(6) DEVELOPMENTS IN JEWISH HANDICRAFTS

As was shown above, the Jews are most numerous in the finishing trades which approach nearest to commerce; in these they, produce goods which they themselves can sell to the consumer. There is no sharp dividing line between commerce and handicrafts working direct for the consumer, and both functions are frequently combined in the same person. Knowledge of the handicraft helps the dealer in his business, and was a reason for his learning it. The jeweller had to be able to set jewels, the clothier to cut the cloth in an expert manner, and the second-hand clothes dealer to restore, clean, or refit his goods in order to make them more saleable; the dealer in watches had to know how to put them together and to repair them. And as the Jew prefers profits to wages, he turned in the first place to the handicrafts in which he was both the maker and seller of his goods — therefore to the clothing and provision trades. Here he could hope by commercial skill to add profits to wages.

This subsidiary position of Jewish handicrafts in relation to commerce explains the present developments in Jewish handicrafts. Wherever commerce offers a favourable chance, the Jews remain in it; but where it is overcrowded, or where, as new immigrants, they cannot freely engage in it

because of their ignorance of the vernacular, they fall back on handicrafts. But they try to keep near to commerce, and give preference to handicrafts which are on the border-line, and which they can easily learn. Real handicrafts, in which the artisan treats the goods from beginning to end, working alone or with a few assistants, and in which several years are required to acquire the necessary technical skill, stand with the Jews on a low level, as the Jew is not prepared to give up several years of his life to learning the trade- Handicrafts which mark a transition to art form an exception — thus gold-work, diamond-cutting, printing and engraving,